

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 17, 2012

CONTACT: Chris Viveiros  
617.927.6342/617.721.7494  
[cviveiros@fenwayhealth.org](mailto:cviveiros@fenwayhealth.org)

**THE FENWAY INSTITUTE ENCOURAGES ALL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS  
TO ASK PATIENTS ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER**

The Fenway Institute has issued two Policy Focus briefs highlighting the importance of gathering sexual orientation and gender identity data in clinical settings and to provide guidance to clinicians to gather such data. [Why gather data on sexual orientation and gender identity in clinical settings](#) explains how gathering such data will help us understand lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) health disparities, and how it is consistent with key recommendations in Healthy People 2020, the 2011 Institute of Medicine report on LGBT health issues and research gaps, and the Affordable Care Act. Gathering such data in electronic health records (EHRs) is especially important.

[How to gather data on sexual orientation and gender identity in clinical settings](#) provides guidance on how to ask questions on patient registration form and how clinicians can ask questions during medical visits. This second brief addresses concerns about confidentiality with EHRs and other potential barriers to collecting data on LGBT identity.

"In order to understand and address LGBT health disparities, we as health care providers need to better understand who our LGBT patients are," said Stephen Boswell, MD, President & CEO of Fenway Health. "These policy briefs explain why asking these questions is important, and provide guidance to help clinicians to gather these data effectively."

The briefs were authored by Fenway staff including Sean Cahill, PhD, Director of Health Policy Research, along with Judith Bradford, PhD, Co-chair and Director of the Center for Population Research in LGBT Health; Chris Grasso, Associate Director for Health Informatics and Data Services; and Harvey Makadon, MD, Director of the National LGBT Health Education Center. They will be disseminated to health education professionals, professional associations, policy makers and other priority audiences.

"The federal government has recognized the importance of gathering LGBT data in a number of recent initiatives, including the Affordable Care Act and Healthy People 2020, our national plan for reducing health disparities," said Sean Cahill. "As health care transitions toward electronic health records, now is the time to gather these data electronically to ensure optimal health outcomes for LGBT people."

**PDFs of the briefs are available online:**

- *Why gather data on sexual orientation and gender identity in clinical settings*  
[www.fenwayhealth.org/whygather](http://www.fenwayhealth.org/whygather)
- *How to gather data on sexual orientation and gender identity in clinical settings*  
[www.fenwayhealth.org/howgather](http://www.fenwayhealth.org/howgather)

For more than forty years, [Fenway Health](#) has been working to make life healthier for the people in our neighborhood, the LGBT community, people living with HIV/AIDS and the broader population. [The Fenway Institute](#) at Fenway Health is an interdisciplinary center for research, training, education and policy development focusing on national and international health issues. Fenway's [Sidney Borum Jr. Health Center](#) cares for youth and young adults ages 12 to 29 who may not feel comfortable going anywhere else, including those who are LGBT or just figuring things out; homeless or living on the streets; struggling with substance use or abuse; sex workers; or living with HIV/AIDS.